



NCLIS

U.S. National Commission on  
Libraries and Information Science

Phone: (202) 606-9200 • Fax: (202) 606-9203  
E-Mail: [info@nclis.gov](mailto:info@nclis.gov) • Web: [www.nclis.gov](http://www.nclis.gov)

1110 Vermont Avenue, NW • Suite 820  
Washington, DC 20005-3552

July 15, 2002

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
and Education Appropriations  
United State Senate  
731 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-1502

The Honorable Arlen Specter  
Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, and Education Appropriations  
United States Senate  
711 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-3802

Dear Senators Harkin and Specter:

I am writing to you on behalf of the members of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science to thank you for your past support of Federal funding for the Nation's libraries and to ask for your continued support as you mark up the FY 2003 appropriations bill this week.

Library Services and Technology Act

As you know, S.2611 reauthorizing the Museum and Library Services Act (MLSA) is pending. The section of the bill entitled the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) authorizes \$350 million in Federal funding for America's libraries. I urge you to fund the level of spending that will be authorized by this bill. This is an extraordinarily successful program that deserves to be continued with increased funding.

A soon to be published Commission report, funded by the National Center for Education Statistics of the Department of Education and prepared by the School of Information Studies at Syracuse University, concludes that the Federal funds for libraries made available through LSTA have generated increases in state, local and other non-Federal support to libraries, as intended. The NCLIS study, which analyzed the first three years of LSTA funding (1998-2000), shows that state funding for financial assistance to libraries outpaced the growth of Federal funds and resulted in participation in the programs of a wider range of libraries, including school, academic, research and special libraries. According to our study, the states of Georgia, Iowa,

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Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, Oregon, Rhode Island, and West Virginia, are among the states that experienced the greatest increase in funding from all sources during the period that was studied.

The original intent of LSTA was that all types of libraries should benefit from the consolidated funding. However, the inclusion of more types of libraries as beneficiaries of Federal funds during the first three years of LSTA occurred without increased funding, making it difficult for states to fully implement the broader vision of the 1996 Act. The increased authorization, if funded, fulfills the mandate of the original legislation.

#### Literacy Through School Libraries

In addition, the Literacy Through School Libraries program was established as part of the education legislation, Leave No Child Behind. A well-equipped and well-staffed school library should be a necessity for every school, not an optional program, so I urge you to raise the FY 2003 appropriation to at least \$100 million. This will ensure that the funds for the improvement of school libraries will go to states as block grants and more school library will benefit.

An April 2001 hearing by the Commission highlighted the fact that students have a higher level of academic achievement in schools with strong school libraries staffed with professional school librarians, as shown by studies in Alaska, Colorado, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Texas. In June 2002 First Lady Laura Bush hosted a White House Conference on School Libraries that reinforced these findings.

Yet reports indicate that school library funding for staff and materials is being dramatically cut back due to the limited fiscal resources in many school districts. Far too many schools lack a full-time school librarian and many elementary school libraries are staffed by volunteers and may only be open one to two days a week. Too many school libraries today have books with average copyright dates 20 to 30 years old, thereby useless for curriculum support. Too many schools only have the ability to provide 15 minutes to a half-hour a week per student for either computer instruction or research. Increased Federal support can begin to improve the situation and ensure that no child is left behind.

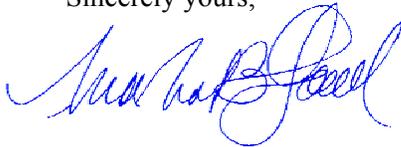
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Finally, the Commission's own FY 2003 request for \$2.8 million falls within the scope of the bill that you will mark up this week. I urge you to provide full funding for the Commission so that we can continue and enhance our work on the evaluation of Federal funding for libraries, requirements for improvement in school libraries, access to government information, information services for individuals with disabilities, the role of libraries in crisis information dissemination and management, and other important matters, as a basis for our policy advice to the President and the Congress.

If you would like additional information on any of these matters, please contact Judy Russell, Acting Executive Director of the Commission by phone at 202-606-9200 or by e-mail at [jrussell@nclis.gov](mailto:jrussell@nclis.gov). The other members of the Commission join me in offering our assistance to Congress and seeking your continued generous support of the Nation's libraries and of the Commission.

Sincerely yours,



Martha B. Gould  
Chairperson

CC: The Honorable Robert Byrd; The Honorable Daniel Inouye;  
The Honorable Fritz Hollings; The Honorable Patrick Leahy;  
The Honorable Barbara Mikulski; The Honorable Harry Reid;  
The Honorable Herb Kohl; The Honorable Patty Murray;  
The Honorable Byron Dorgan; The Honorable Dianne Feinstein;  
The Honorable Richard Durbin; The Honorable Tim Johnson;  
The Honorable Mary Landrieu; The Honorable Jack Reed;  
The Honorable Ted Stevens; The Honorable Thad Cochran;  
The Honorable Pete Domenici; The Honorable Christopher "Kit" Bond;  
The Honorable Mitch McConnell; The Honorable Conrad Burns;  
The Honorable Richard Shelby; The Honorable Judd Gregg;  
The Honorable Robert Bennett; The Honorable Ben Nighthorse Campbell;  
The Honorable Larry Craig; The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchinson;  
The Honorable Michael DeWine